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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000331

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT: POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE CONTINUES

REF: A. HARARE 00327
[1](#)B. HARARE 00317
[1](#)C. HARARE 00314

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES D. MCGEE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B & D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) The MDC-Tsvangirai party and human rights groups have reported a massive surge in political violence orchestrated by senior regime insiders. Soldiers, police, war veterans, and youth militia have been deployed to rural areas to thrash the electorate into submission and to intimidate the opposition ahead of an anticipated presidential runoff election. Hit squads have been targeting opposition members and supporters for abductions, assaults, and destruction of property while forcing the public to attend rallies where they hear threats of more violence and a return to war if they do not support ZANU-PF.

[1](#)2. (U) Since March 29, over 150 victims of post-election violence have required medical treatment -- including 30 victims with serious injuries that required hospitalization. There has been one confirmed death of an MDC-Tsvangirai party organizer. More than 40 new cases of violence have been recorded since April 10.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The pattern of attacks and escalating rhetoric is similar to campaigns unleashed in 2000 and 2002; however, we do not believe the violence will escalate to the level of, or take on characteristics of the post-election tribal violence witnessed recently in Kenya. The violence in Zimbabwe is systematic and orchestrated by the ruling party. It is primarily targeted against regime opponents and is not racial in nature. Further, it is unlikely that the MDC and other regime opponents will fight back. We do note that the situation will likely continue to worsen until ZANU-PF is confirmed in power, most likely through another election it

will not permit itself to lose. END SUMMARY.

Violence on the Rise

¶4. (U) The MDC-Tsvangirai party and human rights groups have reported a massive surge in political violence targeting opposition candidates, polling agents, organizers, and supporters, as well as the general public since the March 29 elections. There have been widespread reports that senior regime insiders, including senior military and police officials, are directing an orchestrated campaign of violence intended to intimidate the electorate to support ZANU-PF in a runoff election and to punish opposition members and supporters. In addition to reports from the opposition parties and civil society groups, we have directly received in the Embassy numerous anecdotal accounts of ZANU-PF attacks and threats.

¶5. (U) At an April 14 press conference, the MDC-Tsvangirai party distributed a "Post Election Violence Report" which provided details of attacks against hundreds of MDC supporters since the March 29 elections, including the following:

- April 6, ZANU-PF youth in Seke attacked MDC local councilor candidate Shepherd Zhanje and broke his right arm;
- April 7, ZANU-PF supporters in Uzumba burned down the home of MDC supporter Tendai Muzadai;
- April 8, armed soldiers in Gutu South constituency threatened a group at gun point that if they voted for MDC

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President Morgan Tsvangirai in the runoff they would be shot;

- April 8, armed soldiers in Kotwa severely assaulted MDC supporters Paul Mhanza and Filter Chikura who sustained serious internal injuries and a damaged ear drum, respectively;
- April 9, ZANU-PF youth abducted an MDC local councilor candidate in Mutoko North constituency and took him to a nearby business center where he was heavily assaulted in front of by-standers;
- April 10, ZANU-PF supporters in Muzarabani South constituency burned down 10 homes belonging to MDC supporters;
- April 12, ZANU-PF supporters in Mutoko South constituency assaulted MDC party polling agents Patience Mapuranga and Mahwisai Chizanga;
- April 12, ZANU-PF supporters in Mudzi West looted the shop of accused MDC supporter Paradzai Chimutsa;
- April 13, ZANU-PF youth in Mudzi East attacked at least 20 MDC supporters.

¶6. (C) MDC-Tsvangirai Secretary for Welfare Kerry Kay also told us that Tapiwa Mbwanda, the party organizing secretary for Hurungwe East district in Mashonaland East province, was beaten to death by well-known ZANU-PF supporters in the area (ZANU-PF Youth Chairman Bilu Kaunda, war veteran Jauret Kazangarare, and Bilu Kaunda's brother Trust Kaunda). Mbwanda's brother was also beaten unconscious during the attack and remains hospitalized. We have received additional unconfirmed reports of other deaths as well.

¶7. (U) Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) reported on April 15 that its members had treated 157 cases of injury resulting from organized violence and torture since March 29. Thirty of these victims (15 from the Mudzi district in Mashonaland East province) remained hospitalized for serious injuries. The most common injury treated was extensive soft tissue injury of the buttocks resulting from prolonged beatings with a hard blunt object. Nine patients sustained fractures. One victim had multiple abrasions on his back and multiple fractures of his arms and hands typical of defensive injuries.

¶8. (C) Dr. Francis Lovemore, director of the Counseling

Services Unit (CSU) and ZADHR board member, told us that violence was escalating as more than 40 new cases had been recorded in her hospital unit since April 10. According to CSU records, the majority of attacks have been in rural areas of Mashonaland East, Masvingo, and Manicaland provinces -- areas that traditionally have been ZANU-PF strongholds, but where the opposition won 38 House of Assembly seats compared with holding only 3 seats prior.

¶9. (C) Dr. Lovemore told us that most victims were threatened with further retribution if they reported their injuries or loss of property to authorities. She also expressed concern about reports that the perpetrators had prevented some victims from leaving the area to seek medical treatment.

¶10. (C) In addition to physical attacks, many victims have had their homes and livestock burned and destroyed and with their families forced to flee. Yeukai Kaseke, the MDC director for elections in the Mutoko South constituency in Mashonaland East province, told us that war veterans and youth militia were holding rallies on a daily basis in the area. During the rallies, opposition supporters were identified and beaten in public to demonstrate the consequences of supporting the MDC. War veterans and ZANU-PF youth also have been conducting night-time raids on homesteads suspected of harboring MDC members and supporters. Many homes have been burned down and livestock killed; hundreds of people have fled the area fearing further violence. Kaseke added that anyone who went to police was told to "solve their own problems" and that a senior police

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officer in the area ordered all his officers not to interfere when MDC supporters were attacked.

Reorientation Campaign: Vote for Mugabe or Else

¶11. (SBU) The MDC-Tsvangirai party and human rights groups have asserted that senior regime insiders -- including high ranking politicians and military officers -- are overseeing the command and control of the violence. We have received credible reports, for example, that Health Minister David Parirenyatwa was directly involved in orchestrating acts of violence and making death threats around his rural Murewa constituency in Mashonaland East province. There also have been rumors that Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa is doing the same in his rural constituency in Manicaland province where he suffered an embarrassing loss to the MDC-Tsvangirai candidate by some 3,000 votes.

¶12. (C) Corroborating reports of involvement of senior military officers, two Embassy employees on a crop assessment trip April 7 - 12 in Mashonaland East and West provinces (including the districts of Kotwa, Mudzi and Hurungwe where numerous attacks have been reported) spoke with an army lieutenant colonel and self-identified members of teams involved in the attacks in the area. (NOTE: The employees were traveling with several civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture and the group assumed they were civil servants as well. END NOTE.) The lieutenant colonel, who is the area manager for Operation Maguta, a program spearheaded by the Zimbabwe Defense Forces to supply and control agricultural inputs and equipment throughout the country, told EmbOffs that soldiers, war veterans, and other ZANU-PF supporters were undergoing military training to carry out a "reorientation campaign" to ensure Mugabe won the runoff election and to punish and intimidate opposition supporters. He said that some 400 vehicles had been deployed throughout the country to support the operation.

¶13. (C) Members of the teams also told our employees that they were directed from one area to another in a coordinated fashion. Coincidentally, while our staff members were talking with the group, several members of the teams assaulted two

youth passing by wearing MDC t-shirts. They also witnessed members of these teams forcing the public in the Kotwa district to attend a rally where they were addressed by war veterans and told to support ZANU-PF because "whites were coming back" to take their farms and they were "going back to war."

¶14. (SBU) Additionally, several local Ministry of Agriculture and Grain Marketing Board (GMB) civil servants that the employees met with on the trip reported that the political situation in the area was tense and that stories of the attacks were circulating in the communities and creating fear. The employees also noted that the areas they visited during the trip were stripped of opposition campaign materials, but ZANU-PF posters were still plentiful. According to the lieutenant colonel, the reorientation program was supposed to continue until the runoff election.

COMMENT

¶15. (SBU) Preceding the March 29 election, Mugabe and ZANU-PF opened up a degree of democratic space not seen in previous elections and allowed rallies and other forms of campaigning in areas that had previously been &no-go& areas for the opposition. Having been surprised by the strength of the opposition which by all accounts won the election, the regime

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is in full survival mode. Part of this is systematic violence and intimidation against the opposition, primarily, but not exclusively, in rural areas, to ensure that in a runoff election ZANU-PF wins by a comfortable margin.

¶16. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: It bears emphasis that, unlike in Kenya, this violence is not spontaneous and is not between rival ethnic groups. It is systematic, orchestrated, and controlled from the highest levels of the ruling party/government and is directed primarily against regime opponents. Further, the opposition has demonstrated in recent years that it is unwilling and unable to confront the power of the government. MDC officials, including party president Morgan Tsvangirai, have confirmed to us that the MDC will continue to pursue a political and non-violent strategy. As such, we do not expect the situation to spin out of control, but to continue steadily until ZANU-PF and Mugabe have been confirmed in power through another election that they will not permit themselves to lose. END COMMENT.

MCGEE